

Fred Hemmings' 3rd Annual Maunawili Trail Run "The Flume Through the Dark Tunnel"

Photo by Keoni Kino

Recovering from knee surgery, Fred Hemmings took time to trace out a trail run through the old part of Maunawili, past Olomana and exiting into Waimanalo. These were trails many have heard about but few have ever run.

Years ago, while running with Kent Bien, they stumbled upon the old water flume—a man-made state-maintained irrigation ditch carved through the mountain to bring water from Nuuanu Pali through Olomana into Waimanalo.

This ditch trail, legend has it, was built by engineers right after the turn of the century—over 90 years ago. At that time Kailua was all swamp and had no fresh water. Waimanalo needed water for agriculture, hence the necessity of the water flume. The flume is about 4 feet wide by 2 feet deep and winds its way around the mountain ridges, working by gravity, to funnel the water several miles into Waimanalo.

An adventurous crew of runners gathered together at 7 a.m. Sunday, June 23 at Fred's home to begin this wondrous experience. To avoid losing the group, Don Eovino and Dawn Isa reconnoitered the trail from Fred's map the night before to see if it was achievable and fortunately stumbled their way through before dark befell them.

Braced with confidence, Don led a group of vigorous runners including Katy Bourne, Paula Jenkins, Norma Santiago, Thea Von Appen and a visiting friend from San Francisco, Kathy Phillips (who so desperately wanted to run trails in Hawaii she told Paula she would pay her for some interesting runs. Little did she know what was in store for her).

Rounding out the group was OCC member Keoni Kino.

They had been warned that the trail was impeded by a tunnel cut through the mountain, so a couple of flashlights were brought along.

The trails Fred found were not well traveled and his map proved quite accurate. It was interesting to note that Fred named landmarks similar to how he and his surfing cronies had nicknamed hot surfing spots. So on the map was the open area known as utilities (in a clearing of utility wires).

After climbing for about one and a half miles up the ridge, the intrepid runners found themselves running like mountain goats straddling the ridge literally between Olomana and Waimanalo.

One foot would be placed on the left side of the trail and you could see all of Waimanalo and Bellows. The right foot would be placed on the right of the ridge and you could see Mt. Olomana.

From that we traversed the mountain, ran past "utilities" and began a short descent until we reached the water flume. Running alongside the flume for about 500 yards, we came upon the tunnel cut through the rock and only about 4-feet high.

At this point Fred and Don scared us with stories about the human-eating Kimodo Dragon who lived in the recesses of the 100-year old cave and trapped unsuspecting explorers, blood sucking leeches, and screaming wombats that also inhabited the tunnel.

So with a whoop and a holler, all runners jumped into the flume, treaded water and precariously entered the tunnel, with flashlights flickering. Amidst laughing, splashing and screaming we plundered ahead bumping, stumbling and stooping for

several hundred yards.

At mid point, to experience the effects of total darkness we temporarily shut off all the flashlights and the eerie darkness was too hard to take for most of the group—on went the lights! With yells of "hurry up" the group plunged ahead until the tunnel opened up to a 6-foot ceiling where all could finally straighten up. Now, at this point-of-no return, the runners felt a little more at ease and finally exited the tunnel a hundred yards further.

One half hour later all of the group was back at Hemmings' cleaning up, enjoying refreshments and talking about what they went through. Fred wrestled around in his chair and started working on a new map for next year. ☺



Making the flume run were Thea Von Appen, Paula Jenkins, Katy Bourne, Kathy Phillips, Don Eovino, and Norma Santiago.

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